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ABSTRACT

Methods for encouraging community involvement and training community volunteers for decision making positions in community schools are described. The functions of community schools are to provide a broad diversity of learning opportunities and to involve citizens in assessing community needs, evaluating services, and advocating community-determined priorities. The manual begins with background information on the Newton (Massachusetts) community school structure, community school committees, the city-wide council, the community school commission, and the central office staff. Subsequent sections discuss community involvement and leadership as well as methods for program review and evaluation. Specific topics include citizen involvement, advisory councils, decision-making councils, internal organization, the staff-community relationship and structure, recruitment, training, program planning, finances, and political and personal frameworks. Evaluation topics include determining the realization of goals, the nature of citizen participation, the effectiveness of citizen involvement, and the feelings of those involved. (KC)

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TRAINING VOLUNTEERS IN COMMUNITY EDUCATION

A manual for staff members in community decision-making settings

By Newton Community Schools
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Particular thanks and admiration go to the Newton Community School leaders who annually volunteer greater than 80,000 hours of their valuable time on behalf of their community.

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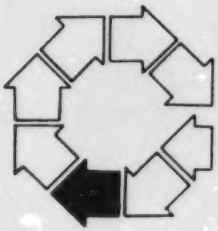


1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, attention has increasingly focused on the meaning of community in our lives. Many individuals approach the concept of community as a way of identifying with others, as a context for sharing values. For some, it is seen as the promise of America, a promise which is often diminished as many of our institutions are perceived as becoming increasingly impersonal. For others, community is a crucial philosophical issue of our times, one which poses vibrant questions regarding the roles of individuals in a technological society. Within each of these perspectives, there exists the shared concern that the quality of our community life is saliently important.

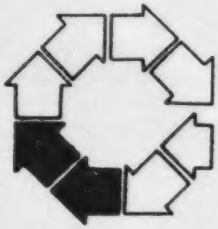
These concerns, often leading to community demands, have been articulated most frequently in the contexts of our community service institutions. Initially, effective forums for expressing these concerns were not available; often, there is still an area of distinct difficulty. As a result, many citizens have encountered feelings of alienation, apathy and of being closed out. Increasingly, though, community members have looked at their local service networks and have raised questions regarding the availability, range and quality of services. Throughout the country, citizens have stressed that there need to be meaningful levels of community involvement, settings for expressing community concerns. As a result, structures have been planned, negotiated and — in some cases — mandated to insure the existence of democratic citizen involvement in the delivery of services. One of the most productive responses to community concerns is reflected in the growth of Community Education programs.

In essence, Community Education has two primary components. The first, to which reference is most often made, is presented through organizations such as community schools: education for the entire community. Within this broad definition, education includes the provision of both innovative and traditional learning opportunities. Accordingly, Community Education encompasses a diverse range of concerns. These include: a) lifelong learning; b) supplemental

programs for the school-age population; c) provision of programming to address the needs of working adults; d) provision of social, health and educational services to the increasing senior adult population; e) career counseling and training programs. Further, as school-age enrollments decline, Community Education responds to demands for increased adult accessibility to and responsiveness of educational institutions.

The second and most crucial component of Community Education is the fundamental involvement of community members in decision-making. It is this essential grassroots participation which distinguishes Community Education from other programs. It is seen as implicit that community members have the right to: a) identify and assess their needs; b) develop necessary programmmatic responses; and c) evaluate the implementation of services. Within this scope, Community Education provides for a new look at community resources, recognizing that traditional systems of delivering education are not always adequate and that new options must be considered to meet the needs of the community constituencies. As a result, Community Education brings community residents together with a sweeping array of community agencies, businesses and interested groups to develop effective programmatic collaborations.

These concepts of citizen involvement and community decision-making, described herein above, form the hallmark of the community schools in Newton, Massachusetts. It is the intent of this manual to assist the reader in exploring further these principles of dynamic community participation.



2. BACKGROUND

Overview

Newton Community Schools is a fundamentally grassroots, community-based organization. The Community Schools began informally in 1971, under the aegis of the School Department. The formal inception of the program occurred in December of 1973, resulting from an ordinance which established joint fiscal sponsorship by the School Committee and the Board of Aldermen, as well as a concomitant structure predicated on community decision-making.

Design

At present, there are 23 community schools, 21 providing services to residents of all ages and interests, as well as 2 serving children and youth with special needs and multiple handicaps. In essence, the enabling structure for the community schools has four components. These include:

I. Community School Committees: Each of the community schools has a local decision-making Committee and at least one Coordinator. Collectively, the Coordinators and Committees — as the neighborhood voice of the community — involve hundreds of community members in the initiation, design, budgeting, implementation and management of all local programming. Collectively, the Committee members and Coordinators volunteer greater than 80,000 hours of their time on behalf of the community.

II. City-Wide Council: The City-Wide Council, with equal representation from each of the Community School Committees, serves as a primary forum to: 1) examine and address issues of common concern, having neighborhood and/or city-wide impact; and 2) formulate policy recommendations to the Commission.

III. Commission: The Community School Commission finalizes general policy for the Newton Community Schools. The Commission is composed of appointees of the Community Schools City-Wide Council, School Committee, Board of Aldermen, Mayor, School Superintendent, Recreation Commission, and the Human Services Director.

IV. Central Office: The Central Staff coordinates administration, supervision and program development and provides comprehensive technical assistance to the entire Newton Community Schools network.

Programming, Participation, and Recognition

As a grassroots community-based organization, the Newton Community Schools are fundamentally concerned with developing and implementing services which relate directly to the needs and interests of each community's members. Accordingly, the community schools offer a distinctly varied range of programs in responding to a population diversified by age and background. Programming has been particularly responsive to the concerns of populations where special needs are just being recognized: pre-schoolers, new parents, retirement-aged adults and the multiply-handicapped. Accordingly, programming includes such offerings as retirement planning, Lifetime Learning for senior adults, early childhood with parent Drop-In Centers, ethnic culture, career planning and special needs services.

The city-wide neighborhood response to Newton Community Schools has been dynamic, as evidenced particularly by striking increases in program participation. These increases are delineated below:

Fiscal Year	Participants
1977	6,149
1978	9,424
1979	12,000+

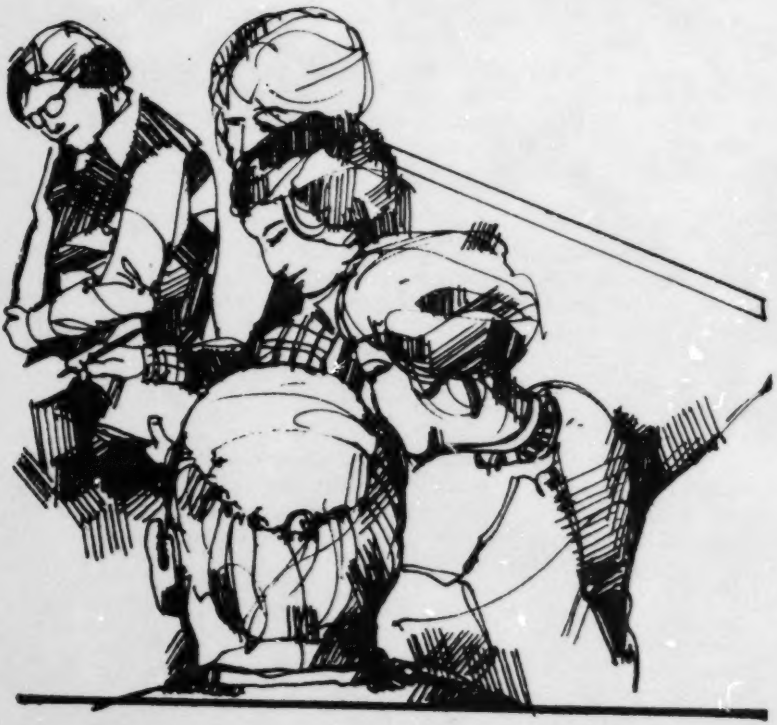
Nationally, these comprehensive neighborhood efforts have been cited for excellence in community programming, inter-agency collaboration and citizen involvement by such diverse groups as the National Municipal League, the National Alliance for Volunteerism, the "Journal of Alternative Human Services" and the United States Conference of Mayors.

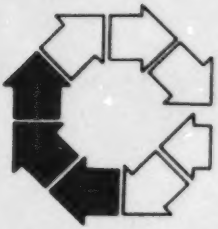
Training Volunteers in Community Education

The essence of Newton Community education is the widespread

participation by citizens in decision-making. This involvement, enabling community members to identify and establish local priorities, has established unique opportunities for community betterment.

In the early months of 1978, the Newton Community Schools — including Committee members, Coordinators, Commissioners and Staff — joined in examining the needs of a growing organization which integrally values citizen volunteerism. From these discussions, the foundation was developed for the "Training Volunteers in Community Education" Project. The goals of this Project have been several, including: a) the development of a model for providing comprehensive training and technical assistance to volunteers; b) deepening the innovation of community education programming; c) enabling community members to assess every level of training services; and d) disseminating the "Training Volunteers in Community Education" manual to the many staffs and community leaders who have expressed interest in the Newton Community Schools.





3. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

"Getting It Going"

Under the rubric of Community Education, community members have increasingly expressed significant concern for issues of neighborhood improvement, quality service delivery and citizen involvement. In responding to these issues, there is a diverse range of levels at which citizens can become involved. These can include significant roles in policy setting, advising, determining and implementing services, administration, budgeting and the like. Community needs and organizational responsiveness highly influence those levels of involvement. Hence, for staff members seeking to encourage meaningful citizen participation, it is essential to develop a heightened awareness of the salient issues in your community as well as to maximize the opportunities for citizen decision-making.

Learning about your community's priorities is a vital, time-consuming task. It is a task of both high and on-going priority. Otherwise, staffs will be perpetually handicapped in assisting citizens in meeting their objectives. Accordingly, effective stafffs are consistently involved in coordinating informal surveys.

The focus of an informal survey is to learn more about your community — its citizens, the impact and inter-relations of area organizations, the multiple levels of involvement presently available in the community, and the needs people feel have been adequately met. In some settings, demographic studies can be very useful in identifying both the physical and human needs of a community. More generally, though, it is essential for the staff member to be in contact with as many community members as possible.

As an example, citizens actively involved in community affairs are excellent resources for: a) understanding how effective past policies and programs have been in satisfying neighborhood needs; b) learning of potential future directions for policy and programs; and c) identifying the local grassroots leadership.

It is equally important to contact community members who have not been active on local issues. Many people have concerns relevant to community betterment, but are not involved for a number of reasons. These can include inadequate institutional access, a lack of self confidence in decision-making, a fear that one's concerns are not vital to the growth of the community, apathy and other related sentiments. It takes many small concerns to create an issue that effectively impacts on the community. As a result, staffs need to assist citizens by stressing that all ideas and approaches are welcome.

Staffs can also benefit by learning of the functions of area organizations. In discovering what linkages are available to citizens, collaborations can be effected — with organizations and their constituencies — towards maximizing available resources. It is also important to identify which organizations are, indeed, community oriented.

In essence, citizen participation is the foundation of the Community Education process. As the staff member learns more about the community, he can greater assist citizens in developing their decision-making capabilities. For community members to feel ownership of decisions, though, as well as to support and advocate for programs, it is vital that they have access to and significant roles in formulating policy. Correspondingly, an organization's strucure is distictly important. Within Community Education, the structure enabling citizen participation is most often that of a Council, either advisory or decision-making.

Advisory Councils

Traditionally, Advisory Councils were established as a form wherein community members advised staff as to what the policies and programs might be towards meeting local community needs. Often, the expression of community concern was welcomed, or mandated, but the community members did not have decision-making power; the power to make decisions and monitor policy rested with the staffs. Over the past decade, though, community members have learned more about organizational processes. Further, they have become increasingly knowledgeable and involved on issues that directly affect their neighborhoods. Consequently, there has been increased presure on staffs and institutions to give citizens more decision-making power. Accordingly, the role of the Advisory Council is — in many cases — changing. And this change is a direct result of effective citizen advocacy and the perceived need by staffs to relinquish some of their traditional authority.

Such a transition can strikingly benefit a community service organization. It is necessary, though, that staffs sincerely value and support this fundamental community role in formulating policy. In a sense, this requires a daily commitment to democracy. As staff assist community members in increasing their decision making capabilities, they can jointly and more sensitively deal with issues relevant to the community. It is manifest that some councils are set up through an ordinance or governing body to be solely an advisory body to an organization. Nevertheless, staffs can fulfill crucial roles by helping council members to become more actively and directly involved in determining programs and policies.

By providing technical assistance to councils, staff can greatly enhance this democratic, participatory process. Such assistance — as delineated under "Community Leadership" — can be enormously helpful to council members in assessing community concerns, in weighing the pros and cons of a particular issue. Also, by regularly providing councils with updated, comprehensive information relative to local issues, staffs can assist the councils on both standing behind and following through on decisions. Hence, an on-going process can be established for assisting community members in determining optimal approaches for satisfying neighborhood needs and concerns.

Decision-Making Councils

Many councils are already decision-making bodies. In some locales, such councils incorporate as non-profit, tax-exempt organizations. In general, Decision-Making Councils are composed of concerned citizens who take an active part in designing, implementng and evaluating policies and programs. Within these settings, staff work collaboratively with the councils to further citizen decision-making and the quality delivery of services. For staffs, this most often involves providing comprehensive technical assistance and support sevices to council members, as well as administering programs on a daily basis.

Contrastingly, there are distinct solutions, though, in which decision-making councils can be negatively influenced by staff members. Although staffs can be sincerely interested in citizen input and decision-making, they may still want to control the policy formulation process. This can be extremely threatening to individual council members and can, as well, jeopordize the entire organization relative to community participation. If council members feel overwhelmed by their staffs, the resulting effects can include antagonism, a lack of interest by council members, an eventual lack of involvement on the

councils, and a decreasing quality in the delivery of community services.

Responsible decision-making is a careful, sensitive process, one easily threatened by issues of control. Particularly for those unused to working collaboratively with community councils, many staffs — sometimes unknowingly — continue to seek control over policy-making. Concurrently, council members experience increased frustration, and their level of involvement on community issues can dramatically decrease. In some instances, council members begin to feel that staffs are less concerned about neighborhood issues and their appropriate solutions, and more interested in controlling the council. When these sentiments become manifest, a situation can rapidly deteriorate. Lack of involvement by council members, as a result of staff pressures, deleteriously effects the entire community. The less meaningful involvement by council members, the less the opportunities will be for dynamic improvements in the community.

The Challenges of Sensitivity

To effectively assist citizens in determining community priorities, staff members must rely on, and continue to develop, a broad range of interpersonal skills. Relating to others in a supportive, but non-threatening, manner requires empathy, patience and commitment. In the face of conflict and frustration, one needs to maintain composure and a sense of humor. As community members describe concerns, it is important to effect linkages, to assist individuals in seeing how their problems may relate to those of others. In effect, as staff members heighten their sensitivity to others, there comes an increased understanding of citizens' needs and of alternative responses for improved service delivery.

Role definition can be a concern for many staff members. In some settings, one may feel that certain staff responsibilities are being usurped by community members. It is to be stressed that, within a dynamic community education program, there is never a lack of tasks to be performed. Hence, when issues arise concerning role conflicts, and these can be quite complex, they should be addressed as rapidly as possible. In general, differences of role — policy making versus day-to-day administration — are more easily remediated than are the previously described conflicts of control, particularly when the staff member has a consistent track record of support of community decision-making.

A staff member's credibility within the community is, in large part, a function of his/her ability to listen. It is important to actively listen to community members, to make an extra effort to hear the expression of concerns. By listening and encouraging citizens to speak up on issues that affect their lives, staffs will see a rise in community involvement on local councils. In listening and assisting citizens to respond to community needs, staff credibility within the community will also increase. Such credibility is most delicate. It takes time to grow and blossom; and once gained, it is imperative that staffs continue to be sensitive to citizens' concerns. Conversely, if staff abuse their position, they risk losing both their credibility and the positive responses of community members, neither of which are easily gained back. In these ways, credibility, concern and commitment lie at the heart of effective and vibrant community-staff collaborations.

Internal Organization

Discussions have varied about which comes first: a council's internal structure or increased community involvement. It can work both ways. In general, by first having an internal structure, however defined, community members are given a guide, a framework for involvement. Internal organization effects behavior; community members like to know what their potential roles can be, and an organization's internal structure can offer a model for on-going involvement by future community participants. Therefore, it is important for staffs to work with founding community members to help set up structures that will encourage community involvement.

Formal or informal, internal structures must be suitable to the council's goals. Generally, the more effective internal structures are those that are flexible, issue-oriented and encourage citizen decision-making. Both staffs and organizational settings can be alienating. It is therefore important that staffs relinquish their traditional authority of determining what is best for community members. As indicated previously, staff control over these internal structures, and the concomitant decisions, only creates community distrust and an unwillingness to become involved. Instead, one needs to assist citizens in developing internal structures conducive to the community's input and decision-making.

Informal Internal Structure

Informal settings, by their very nature, tend to be relaxed and conducive to discussion. Oftentimes, informal settings can also invite an over-abundance of disjointed conversation. An informally structured meeting though, can be highly successful if staffs assist in

keeping the group focused on community issues. It is a sensitive staff responsibility to help the community leadership to redirect disruptive flows of conversation. Further, a staff member may need to facilitate group discussion in order to alleviate confusion and to insure that each individual's concerns are heard. The time allotted for task-oriented sessions is invaluable, and a staff member can fulfill a significant role by helping citizens identify and implement their local priorities.

> The Oak Hill Park Leisure Group serves as an example of a well-organized, informally structured organization. The origins for the group emerged from the concerns of neighbors talking to one another, as they had for many years without any programmatic results. Then, in the summer of 1978, the Oak Hill Park senior adults requested assistance in setting up services responsive to their concerns. Throughout the summer, a Newton Community Schools staff member worked closely with the Oak Hill Park seniors to implement a structure that would best involve other senior adults, as well. It was also necessary to assist the Group in moving from general conversation to a format capable of producing programs and organized leadership.
>
> Subsequent meetings with senior neighbors and friends became predicated on an informal, community structure conducive to the sharing of ideas and concerns. The seniors were supported by the staff member's provision of technical assistance and support services. Citizens and staff worked closely in determining needs and interests, planning activities, locating space and facilities, tapping human resources and implementing the program. Emerging from these summer organizational meetings was a set of programs relevant and sensitive to the concerns of Oak Hill Park senior neighbors: Legal Concerns, Health Clinics, Films, Sing-a-Long, History of Newton, Exercise and Literature Reviews.

Formal Internal Structure

For many individuals, formal structure definitionally connotes that rules of order are in effect, that time is being managed effectively. Yet, formally structured groups often become so heavily involved with

administrative procedures that insufficient consideration is focused on issues of community concern. In such settings, staffs can make a valuable contribution by assisting community members in reorganizing the format of council meetings, in order to maximize the opportunities for discussing neighborhood issues. By so doing, the staff member is also helping to develop the skills of community members in leadership and administration. Further, as the formal internal structure facilitates citizen involvement in policy and programmatic decision-making, the result will be more effective and widespread community participation throughout the organization.

As Community Schools grew in Newton, Massachusetts, the City-Wide Council, comprised of representatives of 23 community schools, began to explore, with staff, various alternative formats for the monthly meetings. The fundamental concern was to develop a strategy that would: (1) successfully facilitate the completion of necessary business; (2) maximize opportunities for personal learning; and (3) enhance the possibilities for sharing experiences among the 23 community schools. Through sensitive discussion and flexible planning, a meeting format was developed which integrated the responsibilities of task completion with unique sharing opportunities provided by small group discussions, round-table discussions and training workshops.

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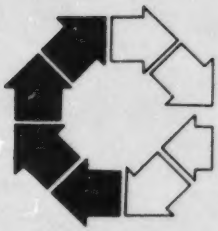


4. COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

"On The Move"

A community educator, in the truest sense, is intricately involved in the development of both relevant educational services and effective community leadership. Indeed, many staff feel their leadership training roles are as satisfying as they are challenging. The challenge of leadership training is the essence of the staff:community relationship. This chapter will highlight several of the many issues affecting this relationship and, correspondingly, the very success of your program.

The Staff:Community Relationship

"They just don't seem to understand"

Staffs and communities often find their relationship to be a source of frustration, not satisfaction. In many cases, the frustration is due to misunderstanding about the staff: community relationship. The lack of clear expectations as to this relationship can have a detrimental effect on both particular individuals and the overall program. Such situations can only be resolved by the sincere attempts of both staff and citizens to develop, share, and clarify their expectations.

This clarification of roles is of vital importance to both established and developing programs. As a new program is designed, it is essential that the basics for the staff:community relationship be made clear. This clarification will have important effects on the recruitment of staff and citizens, alike. The clarifying of expectations does not end during a program's initial design; it is a continuous, day-to-day process.

Continually updating and redefining the roles of staff and volunteers can maintain and increase the energy characteristic of a program's initial stages. Many times, the "going stale" of a program can be directly attributed to role stagnation. As a program grows and develops so too much the roles of those involved change.

An example of such role development can be the determing of the responsibility for publicity. In the initial stages of many programs, staffs have the responsibility to plan and implement effective public relations campaigns. Later, a community public relations committee might have this same responsibility. In such instances, both the staff and the community members must clarify their updated expectations. Unless such clarification is forthcoming, one group may indeed feel that the other is usurping its responsibility.

Clearly, communication between staff and citizens is the key to resolving this and any other role conflicts. To resolve such conflicts, all parties will need to attempt to clearly express their feelings and expectations. This can be done in many ways. Usually, the most effective approaches are: 1) a discussion on group expectations and roles, involving the entire council; and 2) direct, one-to-one communications between the concerned individuals. Other approaches that can be utilized include using a structured exercise on group expectations, available from a local training resource, or the formulation of a staff-community task force to explore expectations, later reporting to the group-at-large.

Whatever method is used, it must be amenable to all parties involved. Without a resolution of roles, a group will have difficulties in both maintaining and attracting people's interest. A group, with a continuously open approach to developing and amending roles, will consistently be renewed by the creative input of its members. Further, the group will consistently attract new members with fresh ideas. Once there is understanding of the responsibilities and functions of all group members, the group can then start to meet their goals and purposes.

Designing an Effective Structure

Having established a sense of purpose, the group is now ready to function. As a staff member, it will be your responsibility to facilitate the development and implementation of ways for the group to function. These various ways of functioning, or structures, must complement the groups goals. A structure is meant to assist, rather than restrict, people's efforts.

If the goal of the group is to develop community social activities, it may very well have a different structure than a community food co-op. Both organizations, however, will need a structure designed to effectively use volunteers to meet the group's goals. Structuring a group is a continuous, often conflict-ridden process. While some members might

prefer a laissez-faire approach, others might want a more traditional corporate structure. When structuring a group, a variety of systems and approaches should be considered.

Structures develop as people attempt to accomplish goals and complete tasks. Having used one approach, a group may decide to restructure its committees, representation systems, or decision-making processes. The continual evaluating and ammending of structures is essential to the development of a successful community program. Staffs must critically observe their program's structure to ensure that it maximizes the available human resources.

External pressures may have as much effect on your group's structures as on its internal goals. It may be political reality that for your program to succeed its structure must include representation from various agencies or bodies. In such, cases, every attempt should be made to utilize these external pressures to the program's best advantage. The structure of the Newton Community Schools is a striking example of an attempt to develop a structure that balances the program's goals with its initial political reality.

The four components of the Newton Community Schools, the local committees, City-wide Council, Commission and Central Office, were designed to facilitate the following:

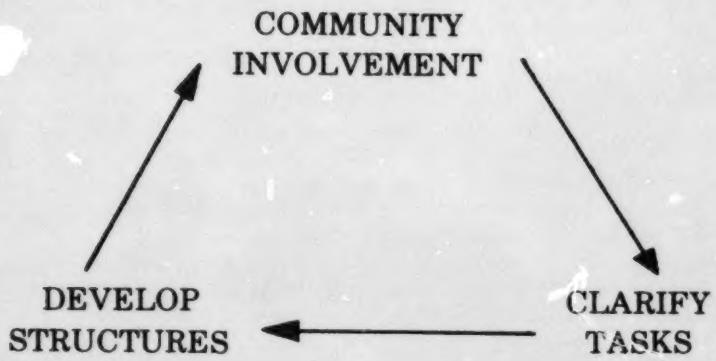
a) a community-based, grassroots decision-making process for program design and implementation.
b) diverse political support.

These goals were met by developing an organization that:

a) provides local committees with the flexibility to develop the structure they deem most suitable while still providing a forum (the Council) for all neighborhoods to share and voice concern.
b) created a policy board consisting of representatives of the Board of Alderman, School Committee, Mayor, the City-wide Council and several agencies.

On the neighborhood levels, a wide variety of structures are being utilized. While a larger neighborhood might have an intricate system of committees and sub-committees, smaller areas might have one, central committee from which all members share assignments. In each case, neighborhood residents design their committees to fully utilize the available human resources necessary for local task

completion. Committees of any structure find it very helpful to keep a record of the group's tasks, structures, assignments, and results.



Recruitment

Structures and roles are important aspects of Community Education because they dramatically affect citizens' involvement. As the above chart demonstrates, organizations develop when the founding members share their ideas, clarify the necessary tasks, develop approaches to accomplish the goals, and recruit concerned people to accomplish these goals. This cycle continues as new members offer their ideas of what to do, how to do it, and who can help. By soliciting the concerns, suggestions, and involvement of new members, a program can ensure this responsiveness and sensitivity to community needs.

There are three primary components of effective recruitment; personal contact, mass campaigning, and targeting groups. Each can be implemented separately, but they are most effective when used together.

Personal contact is far and away the single most effective recruitment tool. The direct, personal appeal between prospective members and others presently involved is of utmost importance. This direct contact can occur among friends, at a meeting, while socializing, anytime! The conversation between the recruiter and prospect should be sincere,

sensitive and positive. Such an approach will make the prospect feel respected, as well as needed. Recruitment should always be honest and never overly aggressive. The recruiter should inform the prospect as to what s/he could expect from joining the group, how they might contribute, and even some of the problems the group is facing. Further, this information should be tailored to the individual concerns and needs of the prospect.

You may very well discuss differing aspects of your organization with different people. A new resident of the neighborhood may be concerned with the social opportunities derived from joining the group, while a retired city councilor's interest is in how s/he may continue her/his civic involvements. Community schools need to recognize the full range of interests and concerns in a neighborhood and recruit those who share any of them. Whatever their motivation for joining, new members should be made to feel both welcome and respected.

Other examples of personal recruitment include "each-one-bring-campaigns" wherein active members are asked to (1) bring one new person to a recruitment/ social meeting, (2) invite people to observe meetings, and (3) involve their peers (e.g. parent find parents, teen find teen, et al).

Mass Campaigns are an effective way to inform large groups of people about your program. Mass mailings, posters, leafletting, bumper stickers, and newspaper/radio/television announcements will inform many people about your program but may inspire only a few to actually volunteer. Few people volunteer without some type of personal contact. In most cases, mass campaigns will be worthwhile for the overall publicity of your program if not solely for the number of volunteers recruited.

When planning a mass campaign, it is important that all materials be attractive, eye-catching, and simple to understand. Slogans such as "Put Unity in Your Community" or "Newton Community Schools, Helping Make Newton Great" will help make your material easily recognizable. Active members should be sure to contact anyone who, as a result of the campaign, expresses interest in the program.

Targeting groups is the process of selecting and utilizing existing audiences as recruitment resources. Local churches, civic, and social organizations are potential sources of volunteers. For a community school, program participants and parents of school students are particularly important target groups for council recruitment.

Once you have developed a list of target groups, you should establish some linkages with them. Presentations might be made at their meetings or information could be submitted through newsletters. Staff should also attempt to discover any existing program linkages; a member of your council may well belong to several other groups. These people might be most effective in making the initial group contact or presentation.

Follow-up on all recruitment approaches is vital. It is necessary to personally contact those who expressed interest in your program as a result of your recruitment activities. They should be contacted by an involved member who is knowledgeable of the program and personable in style. When dealing with volunteers, it is essential to demonstrate your sincere appreciation and desire for their involvement. Community educators must actively demonstrate their sensitivity and support for the concerns and contributions of local volunteers.

Training: The Role of Staff in Getting Things Done

Community Education definitionally involves conflicts between products and processes. On one hand, there is the sincere and widespread concern for developing meaningful educational activities. On the other, there is the commitment and dedication to community involvement and decision-making. Though it may not always be the most efficient mechanism for developing activities, the community-based process is clearly the most effective. It is only through broad-based community involvement that community educators can be assured that programming is responsive to community needs.

Staff can play a vital role in how their community group functions. Effective staffing entails assisting communities to devleop creative and meaningful responses to neighborhood concerns. It also involves helping councils avoid the more routine, traditional programming patterns. Staff have the important responsibility of ensuring community involvement in both the definition and implementation of community school activities. In many instances, community members, who have heretofore been exempt from the decision-making process, will need training and technical assistance that is sensitive and effective. Staff at the Newton Community Schools, and throughout the field of Community Education, have made their most meaningful contributions to community development in the provision of training and technical assistance.

At Newton Community Schools, we have chosen to redefine the concept of training. Herein, training involves helping community members understand the entire process of community service delivery. The comprehensive nature of the service process necessitates that community members possess a variety of skills and understanding of subjects ranging from fiscal management to political advocacy, from needs assessments to staff selection. In this context, training is far more than instruction; it is the sharing and development of skills, confidences, and expertise. Training is the process of helping people stand for and by themselves.

Such training is not easy to provide. It demands that staff not only share their skills and interests, but that they also recognize their personal limitations. By developing an open and unpretentious approach to personal and group development, staffs can maximize their effectiveness. To be most effective, training will involve a variety of resources and methodologies. In this context, training can include formal workshops, disseminations, relevant articles, or conversations on personal and community concerns.

Training of this nature demands that staff see themselves as a peer, as part of the community. The staff must be accepted as an equal, not a superior. Community educators must not only share their own skills but also recognize and take advantage of the skills of others. The traditional trainer-trainee relationship is inappropriate to a community school setting. Indeed, a program totally reliant on staff will, in the long run, prove to be self-defeating.

As a community educator, it is your responsibility to both share and transfer your skills. This can only be done by consistently involving the community in program development. Further, such involvement must be geared to the needs, interests and skills of the particular community members. As in the previously mentioned examples, the skills of the retired city councilor may be more developed than those of the new resident. Though one may presently possess more expertise, their potential contributions to the program are of equal value. In each case, the community educator is responsible for their continued personal development. Thus, training is the individualized support and assistance given to community members so that they can continue to grow and contribute to the community as a whole.

Community educators must help people understand how to accomplish specific tasks, how these tasks are part of the overall program, and how the community can continue to implement such

programs. It is in the context of program planning and task accomplishment that staff usually provide training and assistance. We have chosen to address in this manual three of the many task areas (Program Planning, Finances and Publicity) and two frameworks which affect the overall program (Political and Personal).

Program Planning

Quality programming and community involvemet are intricately and interdependently related.Community involvement helps ensure quality programming, thereby attracting further community involvement. Community educators need to be aware of several components of quality programming.

1) *Assessment*. Every effort should be made to ensure that the community will positively respond to programmatic offerings. Hence, many community service agencies begin by:

a) involving as many community members as possible in the program planning; and
b) asking citizens to describe the interests of the community.

The latter can be done in many ways, including door-to-door interviews, surveys, and presentations to neighborhood organizations. Assessments are not necessarily formal; a discussion, during which neighbors socialize, can easily bring out points of community concern. By utilizing a variety of approaches to assessment, an organization increases the prospects for gathering relevant information. And such information is integral to the community planning process.

2) *Vision*. Having begun the assessment of the community, a council's next task is to develop the appropriate programmatic response. Before deciding on the response, a council should consider numerous, varying options. Brainstroming by staff and community members can produce creative, innovative program ideas. Such brainstorming can only occur in an atmosphere that is open, non-judgemental and, most importantly, not bound by traditions of the program's past. Many councils find it worthwhile to set aside time strictly for brainstorming ideas. At such times, people are asked to list program ideas of any nature. No idea is considered too far-fetched or unreasonable. Further, brainstorming sessions can be enjoyable and inspirational for the councils. At these times, it is essential that no criticisms or final decisions be made; otherwise, the process will lose much of its effectiveness. As a community educator, your ability and enthusiasm for developing a creative vision of programs will be extremely contagious. You should seek to establish an atmosphere that is open to exploring new ideas and approaches. A community school is a tool for building the ideal community. Such an ideal, though, can only be made possible by people sharing their dreams.

3) *Purpose.* Activities should be developed with a sense of purpose. Oftentimes, programs will be designed to meet multiple objectives. Your council should always try to be aware of why it does what it does. Whether to provide social opportunities, to fulfill an important community need, or to publicize a neighborhood organization, all programs should have a purpose. There are many approaches suitable to meeting a particular purpose. Many service organizations, for example, are concerned with providing after-school art activities for children. While some will plan watercolor programs, others might offer ceramics. In essence, purposeful planning will greatly enhance the program's eventual implementation. Know why you want to do something, that others share the concern, and that multiple approaches to the concern have been explored.

4) *Finding Resources.* All programming requires a variety of resources — human, spatial and material. The same creativity, used in designing program possibilities, will also need to be utilized in uncovering appropriate resources. Communities are full of people with a variety of skills, interests, and experiences. A community school must develop ways to recognize and utilize these vast local resources. A resource drive can be an important aspect of a community school's recruitment campaign. Community schools need to develop and maintain a resource file of people interested in sharing their interests with others. Examples of such sharing range from an ethnic cooking night, featuring some of the foreign-born members of the community, to the development of a parent effectiveness group, run by a local guidance counselor.

Another resource pool available to a community school includes the various service agencies and organizations within the community. Many valuable programs and services have developed through inter-agency collaboration. In fact, collaboration often plays a key role in a successful community school. For a community school to provide comprehensive community services, it must initiate and develop meaningful collaborations. Cooperative planning enables agencies to provide the public with direct and cost-efficient services. Examples of effective collaborations include: using community school senior senior citizen activities as health maintenance clinics (Community Schools and Health Departments); sponsoring candidate nights in conjunction with the local League of Women Voters; having local college continuing education programs at community schools; creating a youth job bank with local businesses. By working with other agencies, a community school can improve service delivery, while broadening the overall, community base of support. When

working with other agencies, it is important to clarify the responsibilities of all involved parties. Further, councils should only develop collaborations with agencies whose purposes and functions are in concert with that of the community school.

Program collaborations also provide your community school with increased access to agency resources. The more resources you utilize, the greater exposure your program will then have to other untapped resources. Whenever you do collaborate, you should ask for feedback from the other agency as to the program's success, their feelings on the collaboration, and other possible program ideas.

Supplies and facilities are additional resources that are often most useful. Churches, social clubs, multi-service centers, and even local businesses might have meeting/activity rooms which they would be willing to allow a community school to use. Again, what is generally needed is a sensitive, responsible approach to the group's representative and your assurance the space will be well cared for.

There are many creative approaches for expanding program materials. Many stores and companies will either donate or discount their products as part of their community relations program. Councils should target certain businesses for particular programs. Nike Running Shoes may very well be interested in co-sponsoring or promoting a Community Schools Marathon, for instance. Recycling is another creative approach to expanding supplies. Computer print-out paper can easily be used for posters or art projects. Local computer corporations will, usually, gladly donate boxes of such printouts. One Newton Community School even went on a trash hunting campaign and uncovered a variety of workable and repairable supplies. These supplies were, in turn, used as both program and fundraising items. By maximizing the creativity of their council, a community educator can develop unique approaches to developing necessary resources.

Staff should also be aware of other aspects of program quality such as punctuality, effective scheduling (school-age programs can not be planned while children are in school), attendance, and most importantly, the enjoyment of the participants.

In sum, once your council has established and confirmed a program's purpose, it then should brainstorm possible approaches to the concern. Once this is done, you should also brainstorm and contact any possible resources that might assist the activity's implementation.

Finances

Community schools — like all service agencies — never have adequate financial resources. Consequently, community educators are responsible for ensuring that those financial resources available are used to their maximum potential. Most importantly, staff must ensure that the community understands and is involved in the intricacies of a working budget. Some questions a council should ask in preparing a budget are:

What do we want to do?
How much will it cost?
How much do we have?
How can we make up any difference?

By having a clear idea of program plans and costs, a council can then allocate funds to the appropriate accounts. These allocations can, in turn, provide effective planning guidelines. If, for instance, your council planned on program leaders costing $1000.00, the actual cost may, in fact, have come to $500.00. This could mean that alternative, low-cost resources were utilized. It could also mean that you did not offer as much as originally planned. If the latter is the case, the council should explore the causes.

Knowledge of finances is a tremendous source of power. Often, important but possibly threatening programs are stifled by being told, "sorry, there just isn't any money." In fact, many times, there is money but the program planners just don't know how to get it. Knowing how a budget works includes knowing how you can use money. Community educators must share this knowledge with the entire community, not just with a select few. Widespread financial knowledge, throughout the community, enables citizens to responsibly determine their needs and services.

After the council has established priorities and allocations, it is necessary to deal with the issue of income. At a time of limited resources, few programs will have adequate funding from any one source. Councils will need to find the funds that can make up the difference between what is presently available and the anticipated costs. Thus, community schools must be concerned with fundraising.

Financial support can be generated from two sources, individuals and institutions. Both sources are important to a community school. Individuals can provide income in numerous ways: registration fees, bake sales, auctions, donations, raffles, and the like. Besides recognizing the importance of such fundraising, councils and staff must also be aware of the financial limitations in their particular

neighborhood. Just as councils need to recognize a community's human resources, so too must you assess a neighborhood's financial capabilities. A five dollar dance may seem reasonable in some areas and totally inappropriate within others. Rates for activities, as well as the expectations for local fundraising, must be accurate and sensible.

The same realistic expectations need to be utilized when seeking institutional support. Grantsmanship, the process of seeking institutional monies, is similar in many ways to local fundraising. A council must seek out and effectively approach possible sources. Most often, this will entail some type of a proposal. Proposals will differ dramatically according to the guidelines of the source Government grants, for instance, tend to be far more complex than private foundation procedures. In seeking institutional monies, you will need a clear idea of:

1) goals, objectives, and design of the proposed project;
2) itemized budget of the project and its financial management system;
3) how the project will be evaluated;
4) how it will be maintained at the duration of the source's contribution;
5) who might be willing to support the project.

Grantsmanship appears far more imposing than it need be. By doing accurate research on funding sources and having a well-planned project, you will be making initial inroads to successful fundraising. The importance of accurate research, though, cannot be overstressed. By effectively using a Foundation Library, a council will learn not only the possible sources of funds but also their guidelines, procedures, and funding history. Once the research is completed, the next step is to contact the funding officer and discuss your proposal with them. The funding officer can then inform you as to whether your proposal will be considered by the source, how it might be best represented, or other financial possibilities. This personal contact is as important as the research. The more contact you can establish with a funding source, the more recognizable your proposal will be. Grantsmanship is more often a result of whom you know, not solely what you plan to do. As such, you should make every effort to personally contact funding sources.

You will then have to write and submit your proposal. In doing this, be

sure to clearly and concisely include all the information required and requested by a funder. A long-winded, drawn out proposal stands a much poorer chance of being funded than a short, concise one. Upon receiving funds, the council should provide the source with the courtesies of a thank you note, an invitation to visit the program, and informational updates. Such courtesies will do much to establish your program's reputation among funders.

Funding for a particular program is often viewed favorably by funders if there are multiple sources of support. The Newton Communiity School for the Multi-Handicapped, for example, is funded by Newton Community Schools, the Newton Recreation Department, the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health, the local Office for Children, and the Polaroid Foundation, as well as by parental contributions. Due to the variety of sources, the program is not dependent on any one source and funders need contribute only a portion of the overall costs.

Because of budgetary limitations, councils need to establish program priorities. Hence, councils will need a clear, balanced understanding of program costs, community needs, and financial resources. Councils must decide how money is to be spent and can only do so with accurate information. By assisting councils in understanding financial workings, community educators will ensure community self-reliance as well as quality programming.

Publicity

The goals of publicity are to inform people, to arouse their interest and to solicit their support. As with recruitment, the more direct the publicity, the more effective it will be. Consequently, staff cannot underestimate the value of positive, word-of-mouth contact. Because of this, community involvement in program planning takes on an added dimension; the more people involved in planning, the more people can be told of the activities. Personal contact not only provides the potential participant with accurate information, but it makes participation seem more inviting. Many times, people do not participate because they do not know anyone else at the activity or have never been in a "community school" before. These people might very well participate if directly asked through word-of-mouth contact, a telephone call, or a personalized invitation.

Since it is impossible to directly contact everyone in a community, councils must rely on publicity efforts. Publicity campaigns are most effective when used as a complement to an organization's direct, personal outreach. Posters, mass mailings, and announcements at

public meetings are all effective ways of reaching the community. Such materials, though, do need to be attractive, clear, concise, and easily understood. In areas of significant ethnic populations, publicity materials may need to be multi-lingual. If you want Spanish-speaking people to participate in community schools, your publicity should be prepared in Spanish.

Mass media is another avenue of publicity open to community schools. Local newspapers, radio and television stations usually have their public service guidelines and deadlines available for the asking. It will be important for your council to follow these guidelines. Press releases stand a much better chance of publication if they are well-written, interesting, and submitted by deadline. When writing a press release, use a style appropriate for a newspaper, not one geared for sales literature. Similarly, a radio station may limit their public service announcements to one hundred words, often with a submittal deadline of two weeks prior to the event. If that is the case, do not expect them to read a 150 word announceent turned in the day before the event.

An exciting publicity campaign will be directed by the community, to the community. Many community members possess skills and interests in writing, graphics, calligraphy, photography, and advertising. An effective community educator will utilize these people's skills to the benefit of both the program-at-large and the volunteers' personal development.

By ensuring community involvement in all aspects of program planning, a community educator will be doing much to provide the community with meaningful educational activities as well as with a valuable understanding of how communities function and develop. As a general summation, planning community school activities entails:

1) community involvement in program planning
2) assessing the community's needs and interests in the programs
3) developing linkages and collaborations with other service agencies
4) having the community understand and implement budgetary procedures
5) responsible and effective program management and administration
6) widespread publicity, by the council, to inform the community-at-large of your activities and processes.

Political Framework

Community schools, like all social service organizations exist in the context of a social and political environment. Any program designed to meet the needs of community people must recognize the political dynamics of that community. A community school can be more than an umbrella for activities; it can be a dynamic center for understanding and creating social change. As such, it is essential for community educators to assist people in their efforts to understand and implement local services.

Staffs must be as skilled in their political analysis as they are in their management skills. Councils will need to understand how their program relates to local politics. Such understanding includes knowing who is supportive of your program, who is antagonistic, and the reasons for these positions. A positive, supportive political relationship is the result of lengthy, multi-levelled advocacy efforts developed by concerned community members.

All too often, community educators view political advocacy as a short-term process usually taking place during budget hearings. The Newton Community Schools approach has been to view advocacy in broader terms, as the continual process of keeping public officials aware of the importance, success, and community support of the program. An effective advocacy program is, therefore, comprised of two, independent components:

1) the development of a strong, widely-supported community program; and
2) effective communication about that program to public officials.

With a comprehensive base of community involvement and quality programming, community educators can turn their attention to developing communication with public officials. This communication, or advocacy, will be most effective if it is well planned and pro-active. Public officials should be continually reminded of your program's success. Further, this communication should come from the community members themselves, rather than staff. The voice of the community carries great weight with public officials.

This voice need not always be a scream. As an example, involved community members can mention their programmatic involvement and support to public officials at social and political gatherings. Community schools should have a clear idea of their political network, including which individuals have contacts within political circles.

Many of the people involved in your program might be friends, neighbors, business acquaintances, and campaign workers of local officials. You and your council should have an accurate idea of this local political network.

An active public relations program is another important advocacy tool. The more visible your program is in the community, the more likely public officials are to notice it. Though posters and press releases might be designed to increase participation, they can also serve to solidify your political base of support.

Involving officials in your program can also prove to be politically beneficial. Personally inviting public officials to attend special activities, such as the opening of a new senior citizen center, will provide visibility to both your program and the official. Even if the officials do not attend, you have, at least, increased their awareness of your program.

A third advocacy tool involves support letters from program participants. Periodic letters from participants of all ages stressing the program's personal and community value demonstrate to public officials the community support of the program.

Effective advocacy is balancing the needs of your program with those of public officials. By maximizing community involvement in all aspects of the program, from planning to advocacy, a community educator will be doing much to solidify the program's base of support.

Personal Framework

At many levels, a Community Education program is concerned with human growth and potential. This fundamental belief in human potential, juxtaposed with the community development process, is integral to everything a community educator does. Within community education settings, a staff member's integrity, honesty, commitment, sensitivity and humor are as essential as efficiency in management. Community members will continue to support and be involved in community schools as long as they derive satisfaction from their contribution and treatment. Staffs cannot afford to have community members feel anything less than welcome and respected.

Volunteers need to receive rewards for their efforts but they also need to deserve them. Few people derive satisfaction from undeserved praise. Community members must recognize the importance of their involvement by being involved at the significant decision-making

levels of the program. Increasing community responsibility directly increases the potential satisfaction of community members.

People become involved in community schools for many reasons, ranging from personal social needs to interest in community concerns. Whatever the volunteer's motivation, a community educator must sensitively and effectively foster community involvement.

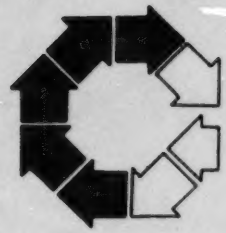
Staffs must work cooperatively with the council leadership to ensure that all volunteers have opportunities to make significant contributions. Authority must be delegated throughout the council membership, not just with a select few. As such, staff will need some familiarity with group dynamics. Periodic evaluations of the group processes and the volunteer involvement should be implemented by the staff and council, alike. In many instances, staffs will need to develop procedures for training and assisting new volunteers.

Community educators also benefit by having a working familiarity with conflict resolution and role theory. At some point, every group encounters conflict. When this occurs within a council, staff will need to know when and how to become involved. In some cases, staff may need to become directly involved in the conflict, while at other times the processes should just play themselves out. Staff will only be able to facilitate their council's dynamics if they have some idea as to how groups work.

Staff play a key role in the dynamics of a local program. It is this very responsibility that makes Community Education so attractive to service professionals. By accepting this important role, with integrity and honesty, and by maximizing opportunities for community involvement, community educators will do much to help local programs grow and develop.

Community Education is a vibrant process by which people can develop their ability to create and provide important services. For this process to be most effective, both staff and volunteers need to be involved. This involvement will cease, though, when it is abused and disrespected. As staff, it is a fundamental responsibility to be a model of integrity and sensitivity when working with volunteers and their program.

Once a community school ceases to be effective and enjoyable to the community volunteers, it ceases to be a "community school." As staff, one must be dedicated to preventing such abuse to both community members and processes.



5. EVALUATION AND PROGRAM CONTINUITY

Critical evaluation is a vital component of the improvement of community school services and operations. It is only by understanding a program's strengths and weaknesses that staff and council members can offer constructive suggestions for improvement. Within community education settings, this evaluation must focus on the quality of both programs and processes. To further increase the effectiveness of an evaluation, staffs and councils need also develop strategies for facilitating the ongoing process of self-renewal. This chapter will focus on several roles integral to program review, process evaluation and institutional self-renewal.

Program Review

There are a variety of methods, both informal and formal, that can be utilized in evaluating local community programs. In general, effective evaluative formats explore such questions as:

1. What were the goals of each activity?
2. In what ways, and to what extent, were those goals realized?

What Were the Goals of Each Activity?

In the previous chapter, discussion focused on the need for community school programming to be planned purposefully. Such purposes, or goals, form the basic criteria for the program's evaluation. As the objective of activities differ, so too will the concomitant approaches for evaluation. A dance that is planned solely as a social activity is most likely to be evaluated in terms of enjoyment and participation. In contrast, an infant nutrition lecture series might be designed as an educational service for new parents. Accordingly, it may be evaluated in terms of the presentation's quality, scope and relevance.

In What Ways, and to What Extent, Were Those Goals Realized?

In order to effectively evaluate a program, it is essential to identify the factors which can influence the degree of successful implementation.

Such factors can run the gamut from bad weather (did it rain on your outdoor cultural festival?) to the experience of the program leader (did the disco dancer know enough dances for ten lessons?). Collectively, these diverse factors can provide a base for comprehensively evaluating local programming.

During the evaluative process, staffs and community members often discover that the program's original goals have changed, have broadened. As an example, the pre-school playgroup may initially be designed to provide needed day care services. Later, though, the program may also have developed into a parent support group. It should also be noted that participants often amend the goals of a program to relate directly to their personal needs. By taking such responsibility for an activity's direction, participants can often ensure programmatic responsiveness to their concerns and interests.

In evaluating programs, councils should examine both the strengths and weaknesses of implementation. Oftentimes one finds that certain objectives were met, but others were not. By discovering the reasons for the success of activities, a council can improve and expand its foundation for future offerings. Correspondingly, initial weaknesses can also be important sources for learning. One may discover that participants consider the programming to be excellent, but that publicity efforts were inadequate. By pinpointing the factors which lead both to success and failure, an evaluation can be an important developmental tool in the future growth and relevance of a local community school operation.

A Diversity of Approaches

In collecting evaluative information, councils can choose from a variety of useful approaches. Frequently, worthwhile information is most effectively gathered by using both informal and formal methodologies.

Informal evaluations consist of conversations with program participants, leaders and other community members. By asking the proper questions, and stressing the importance of feedback, valuable information can be solicited from those involved in activities. On some occasions, councils will also schedule community discussions relative to programming. These discussions can be extremely valuable, particularly when attempts are made to analyze, as well as share, reactions.

A more formal evaluation tool, often utilized, involves the scheduling

of participant discussions at the last meeting of the activity. At this time, a council member solicits and records the reactions of participants. Sessions such as these generally fulfill two purposes: (1) they provide a formal opportunity for programmatic feedback from all the participants; and (2) they demonstrate to the participants the council's appreciation of their involvement.

In community service organizations, evaluation forms generally serve as the most formal means for soliciting evaluative information. By developing and distributing a program questionnaire, councils can receive participant responses relative to present programming. Also, questionnaires can be useful in soliciting suggestions for future activities. It should be stressed that evaluation forms, similar to all other community education materials, should provide space for community members to: (1) express their interests; and (2) indicate their willingness to become further involved in the program.

Whether through formal or informal means, it is essential that community educators seek to ensure that there are distinct opportunities for maximal contribution from participants. If evaluative information is offered repeatedly by the same few people, the program will reflect their particular concerns, while lacking those of other citizens. Hence, one needs to utilize a variety of sensitive, thoughtful approaches to reach as many participants, and potential participants, as possible. It is only through widespread contribution that a community school can continue to respond meaningfully to community concerns.

Process Evaluation

As indicated throughout the body of this manual, it is crucial that community educators facilitate widespread community involvement in all aspects of the local community school. It is much more difficult, though, to assess the involvement processes.

A process evaluation is, at root, concerned with the overall effectiveness of the local council. Hence, important criteria for this evaluation include the nature of citizen participation, the effectiveness of community involvement and the feelings of those involved.

The Nature of Community Participation

Earlier discussions highlighted the need for understanding both the scope and function of community involvement. As with programmatic review, process evaluation is fundamentally concerned

with the degree to which groups fulfill their goals. Accordingly, advisory councils and decision-making councils may choose to be evaluated differently. By establishing clear expectations for citizen participation, though, all councils can create an effective foundation for self-evaluation.

As an example, the expectation of a local council was to have had decision-making authority at all levels of program planning. Accordingly, in this case, evaluation should focus on (a) the program decisions the council actually addressed, (b) the extent of input into those decisions, (c) the decision-making processes utilized, and (d) the overall results. In essence, an effective council is one that recognizes its purposes, functions accordingly, and has the support and commitment of community members. Effective process evaluation can provide vital information relative to these objectives.

The Effectiveness of Community Involvement

When conducting self-evaluations, councils should try to identify the factors which influence their processes. Some factors will be within the control of the council, but others may be externally imposed. For example, a budget cut might eliminate a series of activities that were very carefully planned. Also, key members of the council may conclude their involvement due to employment changes or familial responsibilities. Such reductions and losses can deleteriously affect both planning and ongoing procedures. Accordingly, such factors need to be considered when a council conducts a self-evaluation.

A process evaluation needs to assess a council's procedures, in addition to examining the council's ability to establish and meet goals. As a result, a council needs to look very carefully at how decisions were made:

- Did people feel coerced into certain decisions?
- Is everyone's input respected?
- Does too much control lie with the staff?
- Is power abused by council leadership?
- Is decision-making fragmented along racial or ethnic lines?

As councils explore these concerns, staffs can be of great assistance. By understanding and facilitating the dynamics of a group, community educators can help citizens build successful, effective forums for community involvement.

The Feelings of Those Involved

A basic measure of a council's effectiveness is how people feel about

their involvement. Although a council has a clear task orientation, it can also offer a unique opportunity for council members to come together and share. As a result, a community educator needs to be continually aware of the varying personal needs and interests of council members. In all group settings, participation is enhanced when community members feel both accepted and respected. Overall, an effective council is one in which members can contribute meaningfully to their personal development, as well as the development of the community at large.

Self-Renewal

Institutionalizing a process of self-renewal is one of the most difficult, yet fundamentally crucial, tasks in all community service. For many, the very concepts of institutions and constructive change seem to be in irresolvable conflict. Although there is definitional tension to the process of institutionalizing self-renewal, it can provide a unique base for constructive, proactive community growth. In essence, self-renewal involves the ongoing sharing of thought, action and thought: carefully identifying community concerns; implementing sensitive, responsive programs and processes; and, taking a careful look at what has been done towards the goal of thoughtfully improving in the future.

Within community educational settings, staff members and councils can greatly ensure the vibrancy of the organization by developing practices that enhance the effectiveness of involved community members. Specifically, this involves (1) the continual recruitment and training of newly involved community members, and (2) developing favorable roles for experienced council members.

Recruitment of community members is essential to both the continuation and the flourishing of a local community school. As part of this recruitment, new members should receive a complete orientation to the program, with attention focusing on the program's history, present concerns and possible future directions. Further, the orientation should stress the vibrant roles and opportunities available to new members.

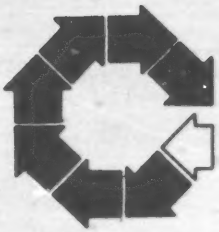
Comprehensive training, cooperatively developed by council members and staff, is a necessary complement to the successful orientation of new members. Such training should highlight the local program's complete range of policies, practices and procedures. Lastly, and significantly, new members should receive adequate training necessary for effectively carrying out their preferred tasks. Herein, a new member should be assisted in understanding both a

particular task and its overall context. For example, a community member interested in publicity could be trained in all aspects of a publicity campaign, as opposed to just being involved in making posters. As community members increasingly learn the relationship of specific tasks to the overall operation, task efficiency and community participation increase dramatically, thereby enhancing the future growth of the community school.

Developing meaningful roles for experienced community leaders is equally as important as providing training for new members. Community service programs are, on an ongoing basis, in transition between the newer and the more experienced council members. Within this context, the importance and potential of experienced volunteers cannot be underestimated. For staff members there is a distinct challenge to assist community members in tapping this unique potential. Specifically, more experienced community members can be valuable learning resources for newer members, relative to all levels of the community school.

This developmental approach to community leadership training can ensure meaningful opportunities for both the newer and the more experienced volunteers, alike. By working with community members to structure such opportunities, staffs can play crucial roles in facilitating the continued growth, creativity and self-renewal of local community schools.

In essence, staff and community members can jointly provide meaningful community learning experiences. The purpose of evaluation is to deepen one's understanding of, and to learn from, past and future endeavors. This, in turn, increases the effectiveness of the program within the future. Such evaluation is an integral component of a community service organization's ongoing self-renewal, thereby helping to maximize the sensitivity, responsiveness and quality of locally-determined, community educational services.



6. SUMMARY

Citizen involvement and community decision-making form the underpinnings of Community Education. In this context, both staff and community members encounter challenges and responsibilities that present unique opportunities for growth. An active and well-informed populace, working with sensitive, supportive staff members, can fulfill vital leadership roles in determining and delivering responsive community services. Accordingly, each community has the capability to develop a working commitment to participatory democracy, lifelong learning and, most particularly, to the talents and services of the citizen volunteers who are the foundation of community life.